



# FORTNIGHT

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A Communiqué focusing on topics related to Outcomes Assessment, Institutional Effectiveness, and Institutional Research produced jointly by the Office of the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) at the College of Staten Island/The City University of New York

[www.library.csi.cuny.edu/assessment](http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/assessment)

## WHAT IS FORTNIGHT?

A **fortnight** is a unit of time equivalent to 14 days. The term derives from the Old English *feorwertyne niht*, meaning “fourteen nights.” Inspired by the opportunities and challenges of Middle States Standard 14 and the desire to share information and best practices, **FORTNIGHT** is a communication vehicle which is distributed online to the campus community. Prior issues are available on the Associate Provost’s website at [www.library.csi.cuny.edu/assessment](http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/assessment)

## DAY OF ASSESSMENT 2010 HIGHLIGHTS

CSI’s sixth Day of Assessment, held on Friday, April 9, featured five presentations representing varied initiatives directed to assessment and institutional effectiveness on campus. Approximately 70 participants, including guests from BMCC, City College, John Jay, and Medgar Evers learned about the progress being made at CSI in academic areas, operations, and sustainability initiatives.

Following opening remarks and acknowledgements by Associate Provost Susan Holak, President Morales gave greetings and reiterated the importance of the College’s comprehensive efforts towards assessment, continuous improvement, and evidence-based decision-making. The morning’s first presenter, Dr. Rosane Gertner, Assistant Professor of Marketing, described the Business department’s coordinated approach to assessment, which began in the marketing area. In her presentation she enumerated the department’s common learning objectives and described the meticulous process that went into the development of their exit survey. Representatives from other academic departments expressed interest in adopting the survey format for their students.

The Library was represented by Chief Librarian Dr. Wilma Jones and Mr. Jonathan Cope, who gave a presentation entitled “From Studies to Stacks, Food to Facts: Using Data and Information to Plan for the Changing Face of the Academic Library.” The speakers noted that campus libraries have become far more than repositories for books and academic materials; they now serve as gathering places, centers of technology, and sources of digital information, and have become physical destinations for all sorts of campus needs. Using data from three large studies, the CSI Library has adapted its physical space, updated its holdings, and responded to community needs on many levels.

Dr. Carlo Lancellotti, Associate Professor of Mathematics, and Dr. Nelly Tournaki, Associate Professor of Education, represented the efforts of several departments to increase interest and retention in the STEM disciplines through STEAM (STEM Talent Expansion via Applied Mathematics), funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation. This topic resonated with audience participants from CSI and other campuses, particularly with regard to the retention of underprepared math students, and the bridging of curriculum between MTH 123 and other disciplines.

In a not-to-be-missed lunchtime session, Alan Hoffner reviewed the Library’s efforts of continuous improvement. The audience was quizzed on their knowledge of Library seating – complete with several decades’ worth of actual furniture specimens. Responses were captured and presented using clicker technology, facilitated by Doriann Pieve-Hyland and members of her staff. The session ended with a highly competitive “assessment edition” of musical chairs.

Staten Island bus routes, tolls, GIS mapping, carbon footprints, and the politics of transportation funding were among the topics in a very enthusiastic presentation by Dr. Jonathan Peters, Professor of Finance in the Business Department, Dr. Alan Benimoff, CLT in Engineering Science and Physics, and Dr. Richard Flanagan, Associate Professor of Political Science. This presentation was the inspiration for the conference theme of a “green” campus – all attendees received bio-friendly CSI bags, and table centerpieces were planted after the event to help beautify the campus.



In the final presentation of the day, Associate Provost Susan Holak and Professor Richard Powers, Co-Chairs of the CSI Middle States Self-Study Design effort, along with OIRA Coordinator Warrick Bell, presented the proposed self-study design plan, timeline, and next steps. Given the imminent campus visit of our Middle States Vice President Liaison on April 14, this additional opportunity to share information was particularly timely.

We thank all the members of the campus community who worked to make the Day of Assessment possible, and would like to acknowledge the funding provided by the Office of Academic Affairs. Slide presentations from this event and previous Days of Assessment can be found on the Associate Provost's website at [library.csi.cuny.edu/assessment](http://library.csi.cuny.edu/assessment).

## PREPARING FOR THE MIDDLE STATES SELF-STUDY: STANDARD 12

### Standard 12: General Education

*The institution's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technical competency.*

The College's General Education Committee approved seven over-arching curriculum goals in Fall 2009, and began examining the Gen Ed offerings to determine the extent to which they are currently addressed. All academic departments and programs have been asked to provide information about their General Education courses, and the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment is compiling aggregate maps using this information. A preliminary presentation of the findings was made to the General Education Committee during its April 2010 meeting.

## CLOSING THE LOOP: BIOLOGY REVISES MATH REQUIREMENTS AND ENHANCES CURRICULUM

Beginning in Fall 2009, the Biology department established MTH 123 as a pre- or co-requisite for BIO 170/180, the introductory biology courses for majors. According to Department Chairperson Dr. Richard Veit, Biology faculty observed and reviewed student performance over several years and found that students entering BIO 170/180 did not have the mathematical skills required for study in the major, such as facility with interpreting graphs on linear and logarithmic scales or an understanding of basic geometry and algebra. It is also typical in university biology curricula to have students ready to take calculus (the next level up from MTH 123 material) when they start science courses, including introductory biology.

Concurrent with these new math requirements, the department also introduced four new math-based biology laboratories to the 170/180 sequence as part of STEAM. Students in sections that incorporated these new labs were surveyed, and their answers compared to those in other sections. On the basis of these surveys, it was found that students who experienced the new labs were more appreciative of the value of mathematics in other sciences. These students were also more likely to begin or remain within a science major.

## CUNY NEWS AND EVENTS

The Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) remains open for responses. This national survey gives insights into the teaching faculty's perceptions of their students, and can be usefully compared with the student responses that were collected last year. Please access the survey using the invitation that was emailed to full-time faculty. It is very important that we maximize our faculty response rate.

## FORTNIGHTLY NOTES

In 1858 Henry David Thoreau observed the nesting habits of several types of birds, noting in *Early Spring in Massachusetts* that he could "hardly believe that hen-hawks may be beginning to build their nests now, yet their young were a **fortnight** old the last of April last year." Thoreau lived on Staten Island with Ralph Waldo Emerson's brother William in 1843-44.

Everyone is invited and encouraged to submit items related to departmental assessment projects, College institutional effectiveness activities, committee announcements, and best practices by **April 30, 2010** for consideration to appear in the next communiqué.

